



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY

Opening Statement

Ranking Member Emilia Sykes (D-OH)

Investigations and Oversight Subcommittee Hearing:

*“Powering America’s AI Future:
Assessing Policy Options to Increase Data Center Infrastructure”*

February 24, 2026

Thank you, Chairman McCormick, for holding this hearing. This will be a very interesting and timely discussion.

When you go to watch your favorite show, send an email, shop online, or save a photo, you are using what is known as the “cloud,” which is really a general description for a data storage service. But this “cloud” is not in the sky, it’s in our backyards.

To manage the massive amounts of data used by consumers and industry, tech companies have constructed massive data centers full of rows and rows of computing and network equipment. And these very real facilities have very real consequences for the communities that they are in.

Ohio alone has 217 data centers, the fifth most of any U.S. state. This includes four in Stark County and seven in Summit County.

I want to be clear that I am not reflexively opposed to data centers.

In my district, Ohio’s 13th District, a number of townships are already hosting data centers, and I will always support the communities in my district that pursue job creation and added tax revenue through large infrastructure investments. However, that does not mean that Ohioans should pay higher electricity bills for billionaires in Silicon Valley to see higher profits.

We must fully understand the tradeoffs of data centers, both the potential they hold for quality jobs and investment in our communities, and their impact on electricity costs, our environment, and even our health.

For instance, my district is home to a cryptocurrency company that once operated the world’s largest data center in China, but is now headquartered in Akron, Ohio. It is known as Solai Limited, with a data center on Seiberling Street. This data center can use about 83 megawatts of power per day and has the ability to draw enough electricity to power 63,000 homes. For context, there are nearly 85,000 homes in all of Akron, and Ohioans have already been seeing increasing electricity costs because of data centers. Moreover, due in part to increased energy use, studies

have shown that communities can see increased air pollution from these ‘crypto mines,’ increasing health risks.

And of course, we can’t talk about energy in Ohio without talking about bribery. Solai, formerly known as BIT Mining, was also fined \$10 million in a foreign bribery scheme. It is clear that we need to do more to protect residents near these centers while also ensuring they are operating using good, legal business practices that do create jobs for our communities.

The truth is, there is much that we do not yet know about data centers. But the known impacts on electricity prices, the environment, water utilities, and air pollution should give us all pause before we agree to an unprecedented buildout of data center infrastructure without any guardrails to protect the American people.

It is no secret that land for these centers is cheaper in some parts of my district compared to other parts of the country, and I am certainly not opposed to large-scale infrastructure investments that will boost Ohio and our country’s competitiveness. But while ultra wealthy companies may find our property prices affordable, constituents in my district are facing an affordability crisis everywhere they turn.

So we are at a crossroads. We need to decide the right way to harness this explosive growth in data center infrastructure so that they increase job opportunities and investments in our communities instead of increasing costs.

One path would be the Trump Administration’s approach: few safeguards, rapid expansion, and a total embrace of data centers with little thought to the communities that host them. I’m not comfortable with that approach.

We need to choose a path that avoids mistakes before they are made instead of dealing with them afterwards, and puts strong guardrails in place to protect our communities. If we can address these questions with rigorous, high-quality research, our country and our constituents will be far better off.

To that end, I’m very pleased to welcome Dr. Eric Masanet to this hearing. Dr. Masanet is a leading researcher trying to model and understand the long-term impacts of data centers, and his perspective will be invaluable for the Committee as we consider this issue.

Dr. Masanet, thank you for your willingness to testify, and thank you to all of our witnesses for appearing today.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.